UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.96/SR.483
11 October 1993

Original: ENGLISH

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Forty-fourth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 483rd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 5 October 1993, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. BODDENS-HOSANG (Netherlands)

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General debate (continued)

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GE.93-02704 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4) (continued)

1. Mr. TARRE MURZI (Venezuela) said that a meeting of UNHCR had perhaps never been as timely and necessary as now, when mankind was again divided between peace and war, poverty and development, conciliation and aggression and tolerance and ideological sectarianism. The High Commissioner had stressed the need to coordinate humanitarian and peace-keeping operations and Venezuela agreed with that concern. UNHCR's activities could be successful only if they enjoyed the political support of the international community. Hence the need for backing from the Secretary-General and the Security Council. At present, 19 million refugees depended on UNHCR, yet that figure could well increase in view of the situations in the former Yugoslavia, western Africa and Bangladesh, not to mention the thousands of displaced persons who were technically not covered by the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol.

2. The focus of UNHCR's mandate must remain refugees: any expansion of its responsibilities might jeopardize and undermine its work. Accordingly, in situations involving internally displaced persons, other organizations and Governments themselves must assume their responsibilities and coordinate their activities.

3. Voluntary repatriation, as the High Commissioner had pointed out, must go beyond mere logistics and create conditions of security for reintegration, especially in countries like Afghanistan and Mozambique. The United Nations and non-governmental organizations must cooperate in rehabilitation and development efforts. International efforts had to be made to resolve the root causes of the problem of refugees and displaced persons and prevention seemed to be the most constructive long-term solution.

4. Venezuela welcomed the efforts made by the Office of the High Commissioner to strengthen its capacity to respond to emergency situations and approved of the agreements it had signed with the United Nations Volunteers as a means of enhancing its activities. The improvement of human resource management despite difficult conditions and the lack of security for staff was also a welcome development. Venezuela supported the establishment of priorities for assistance, in view of the gap between UNHCR's resources and the volume of requests for humanitarian assistance.

5. The agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and the new wave of understanding among the peoples of the Middle East made the international situation look promising: perhaps the long decades of conflict and senseless war would soon come to an end. Yet side by side with growing understanding among Arabs and Jews, there was the sad spectacle of war in many parts of Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. His Government was concerned about the recent developments in Moscow and hoped to see normalcy, peace and the rule of law re-established in Russia.

6. If the world was to resolve the tragic plight of individuals who were persecuted, displaced and uprooted, it must rid itself of the traditional, materialistic view of human existence and adopt a new ecumenical commitment to

international social justice. His delegation attached special importance to the statement made at the 481st meeting by the representative of the United States, in which he had recalled his Government's efforts to get to the root of the major problems resulting from armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union, Angola, Mozambique and other regions. Those words inspired optimism about the future of mankind in the next century.

7. As the representative of Thailand had pointed out at the 481st meeting, certain institutions and legal principles were being undermined at present. The right of asylum, for example, was being questioned and, in some democratic States of Europe, its revocation was being sought. It was to be hoped that that did not constitute an outbreak of xenophobia that might subsequently turn into intolerance and political and social repression. Some members of the Executive Committee which had an excellent track record as far as the rights of citizens, minorities and victims of injustice were concerned now seemed inclined to modify the traditional right of asylum by an ambiguous formulation permitting racial, social, political, ideological and ethical discrimination. That absurd and incomprehensible manifestation of chauvinism could degenerate into a veritable witch hunt that bore comparison with the period between the wars when Europe had been beset by the evils of persecution and racial and religious discrimination. Such phenomena should be discussed within UNHCR so that international public opinion would be alerted early on to the growing opposition to asylum for the millions of refugees seeking only peace, work and security.

8. He congratulated UNHCR on its successes in Cambodia, Thailand, Central America (CIREFCA) and the Caribbean and expressed the hope that similar results would be achieved in Mozambique and Malawi. Venezuela urged the international community to arrive at a consensus with a view to taking steps to solve existing protection problems, particularly those relating to young refugees and sexual violence against women and girls. It was necessary now more than ever to strengthen UNHCR, for its work was essential in a world agitated by the spread of absurd conflicts and senseless killings in the Balkans, between Russians and national groups that had formerly belonged to the USSR, and in a number of towns in Africa and Latin America.

9. There was a place in the world for all races and peoples; for victims of injustice, refugees and those left behind by economic development. The attention paid to individuals would determine the fate of mankind. Only through a new international structure under the auspices of UNHCR and with the assistance of the developed countries could racism, xenophobia, and the exploitation of man by man be ended so that there would no longer be 19 million refugees and 24 million displaced persons on earth. Such were the desires and aspirations of the Government and people of Venezuela.

10. Mr. SEVILLA SIERO (Nicaragua) noted that the introduction to document A/AC.96/813 indicated that the period 1992-1993 had seen the largest flow ever recorded of refugees. The situation was still more dramatic when it was recalled that, in the 1950s, when the Office of the High Commissioner had been created, the word "refugee" had referred to what had been almost exclusively a European phenomenon, resulting from the Second World War and it had been expected that the phenomenon would disappear by the end of the decade. However, time in its passage had been relentless and harsher than

expected. In the 1960s, decolonization had taken the phenomenon to Africa and, in the 1970s, it had moved onward to Asia and part of Latin America, owing to dictatorial regimes. The phenomenon had been exacerbated in the 1970s, with the millions of Afghan refugees and the fratricidal internal disputes in Central America. Now, in the 1990s, the refugee phenomenon was returning to wreak havoc on European soil, while at the same time making inroads on other continents as well.

11. The traditional concept of "refugee" as set out in the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol no longer applied to the variety and gravity of problems faced by millions of displaced persons seeking refuge, not only from armed confrontation, but also from poverty, hunger, drought, etc.

12. When legal texts were overtaken by real events, it was necessary to fill in the gaps and that could be done through redoubled support for the Office of the High Commissioner. The legal instruments governing the status of refugees could be brought up to date on the basis of the skill, courage and intelligence being brought to bear on finding lasting solutions.

13. His Government supported the statement made by the representative of Mexico in her capacity as Chairman of the CIREFCA Follow-up Committee. Some of the guiding principles of CIREFCA's action were the strengthening of peace, national reconciliation and democracy, as well as persistent efforts to create the necessary conditions for the reintegration of displaced populations. Any measure of peace and democracy achieved would be tenuous if not accompanied by an effort to go beyond the stage of humanitarian assistance. It was therefore appropriate that countries should continue with the goodwill they had shown in the four years since the adoption by CIREFCA of the Concerted Plan of Action in 1989.

14. While the international community had expressed satisfaction with the CIREFCA model, support would still be required in the upcoming transitional stage. That transition must not be relegated to a mere problem of dates and schedules, for the problems involved could not be programmed with mathematical rigour. It was not because UNDP would be involved in post-CIREFCA activities that the assistance of other agencies, including UNHCR, would no longer be needed. UNHCR must continue to support the efforts of the CIREFCA countries.

15. His Government had recently submitted a set of proposals to the CIREFCA Joint Support Unit for an action plan for 1993-1996 and a number of Quick Impact Projects to last three years, starting in January 1994. The submission of the action plan had been motivated by the critical poverty of major sectors of the Nicaraguan population. The disparity between the demands of certain population groups and the Government's limited response capacity had resulted in the reappearance of armed groups, representing a serious threat to the process of peace and economic revival.

16. The QIP proposal had been motivated by the fact that hundreds of families had been displaced and by the serious limitations on the country's resources. That combination of circumstances made it essential to combine efforts to respond rapidly to the needs of those population sectors. Nicaragua was requesting economic support from the international community for the financing of both the action plan and the Quick Impact Projects.

17. The question of population displacement must remain on the international political agenda, although UNHCR must continue to adopt a humanitarian and apolitical approach.

18. Mr. MORKVED (Norway) said that, in the past year, UNHCR had been faced with new opportunities for positive action and with painful dilemmas. The High Commissioner's threefold policy of preparedness, prevention and solutions seemed increasingly pertinent as a framework for concerted international action regarding refugees and displaced persons. His Government was pleased that a systematic collaborative approach to complex humanitarian emergencies was gaining momentum, as evidenced by the partnership in action being instituted between UNHCR and non-governmental organizations. The intent was to maximize the capacity of all the agencies involved to respond more effectively to the humanitarian needs of populations affected by conflicts. He extended a warm welcome to all those who would participate in the related Oslo conference in 1994.

19. While 1993 had seen the emergence of new refugee populations, some long-standing refugee problems had nevertheless been solved and the refugees had been able to return home. Voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity was the most satisfactory remedy to forced exile, implying that countries of origin assumed their responsibility for safeguarding the rights of their citizens. His delegation commended the High Commissioner on her consistent promotion of voluntary repatriation as the best durable solution and stressed the importance of providing adequate information to refugees. Some repatriation operations were hampered by financial constraints. His Government had decided to allocate an additional US$ 1 million to the special operation for the repatriation of Mozambican refugees.

20. With regard to asylum, Norway fully recognized its obligations as a party to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. The continuous influx of asylum-seekers without a valid claim did, however, call for new mechanisms and for international cooperation to maintain and strengthen the viability of the institution of asylum. The strain placed on asylum systems by irregular population movements and abusive claims constituted a serious challenge to international refugee protection. The development of effective procedures for the determination of asylum claims was vital, as was close cooperation among States. Agreement on concepts such as that of first-asylum countries was paramount in that connection.

21. The principle of non-refoulement was a cornerstone of international refugee law and the basis for State conduct towards refugees. It must be observed when a return to a country of first asylum was being considered. Measures to curb abuse of asylum could be implemented, in his delegation's view, without jeopardizing important legal safeguards ensuring that no refugee would return to a situation of persecution. It was equally important that mechanisms to contain irregular migration should be balanced by measures that offered asylum to those in genuine need of protection.

22. Norway shared the High Commissioner's concern about the need for comprehensive regional arrangements to cover asylum, protection and migration. The emergence of new conflicts in Europe demonstrated the interdependence of governmental policies and practices relating to refugees. The dramatic

outflow of victims of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia had led most European Governments to introduce visa requirements for nationals of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Norway had long refrained from implementing such a policy, but the recent sharp increase in the number of Bosnians seeking protection had made it impossible to maintain that position. The Norwegian Government had thus imposed visa requirements on Bosnian nationals.

23. Abuse of human rights lay at the core of many refugee situations and gross violations of human rights often triggered internal displacement. The internally displaced needed protection and assistance. His Government supported UNHCR's basic criteria for involvement and its efforts to assist internally displaced persons.

24. In the past year, hopes for peace in the former Yugoslavia had been severely tested again and again by protracted atrocities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There seemed to be no limit to the brutality human beings were capable of in pursuit of the establishment of ethnic nation-States. The time had come to end the bloodshed: another winter of war was only weeks away. A negotiated solution was needed now.

25. Norway was among the major providers of humanitarian assistance to the former Yugoslavia. All of its efforts had been mobilized in close cooperation with UNHCR. Assistance provided by Norway in 1992 had exceeded US$ 22 million. For 1993, and subject to parliamentary approval, Norway had pledged US$ 35 million. Most of that assistance would continue to be channelled through the lead agency, UNHCR. His country attached great importance to the new management structure recently established in Zagreb to coordinate infrastructure, energy and shelter programmes.

26. Norway would continue to lend strong support to UNHCR's humanitarian work and to its leading role in the former Yugoslavia. His delegation echoed the High Commissioner's profound concern for the security of field staff. It deeply regretted that, in many situations, humanitarian access had been severely impaired owing to the high degree of violence and cynical non-observance of the Geneva Conventions by the warring factions.

27. The historic breakthrough in the Middle East revealed that even the deepest trench could be bridged. New hopes for peace and development had been brought to thousands of refugees in a region tormented by conflict for most of the century. His Government felt privileged to have been able to contribute to that process. Norway, together with other countries, was taking practical steps substantially to increase its support to refugees in Gaza and the West Bank. It was of the utmost importance that the fruits of peace should be made tangible and real.

28. Ms. CARRIZOSA de LOPEZ (Colombia) said that, with the challenges represented by an increase in refugee flows and the expansion of UNHCR's activities to cover internal displacement, there was a danger that positions would be adopted on the basis of political rather than humanitarian considerations. In the conditions of violence currently prevailing in Colombia and with the problem of internal displacement in Colombia and Peru, Governments might fall into that very error. If they perceived the High Commissioner's concern as a possible form of interference in the internal

affairs of States, they might consider that national sovereignty was being undermined. It was for that reason that her country wished to make a number of comments.

29. The current emphasis on preventive measures hardly seemed to fit in well with UNHCR's mandate, which was essentially humanitarian. Such an approach would be comparable to having the International Committee of the Red Cross turn from the alleviation of crisis situations towards political measures, such as preventing armed conflict, or other areas of specialization, such as preventing natural disasters. It was its respect for UNHCR's achievements, which mainly related to the right of asylum and non-refoulement, that led Colombia to consider that the Office's support mechanisms should not be undermined.

30. The desire to expand UNHCR's activities into dealing with internal displacement was understandable. The right of international protection should not be denied simply because a displaced person had not crossed a national border. That right could and should be upheld wherever UNHCR's activities were aimed at humanitarian assistance in a crisis situation.

31. It was such a situation that existed now in Colombia, where frightened families and groups of families were temporarily moving to neighbouring areas and where the reasons for displacement were so diverse as to range from confrontations among guerrilla groups, drug traffickers and the forces of order to deficiencies in public services. What preventive action could be taken by UNHCR or any other international agency that had not yet been taken into account in the Colombian Government's strategies for dealing with violence and promoting development?

32. On the other hand, the assistance measures promoted by the Government's Security and Social Emergency Fund did serve and benefit the persons affected by such circumstances. With the assistance of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Fund dealt with problems of health, transport, housing, food and searches for individuals in order to ensure family reunification.

33. Her Government considered it important that financial and technical cooperation projects should be supported within the United Nations and regional systems in order to help States now seeking to develop structures that would enable them to deal with internal displacement. The purpose should be the provision of strictly humanitarian assistance and aid and the diversion of such laudable cooperation towards grey areas that might be interpreted as a challenge to national sovereignty should be carefully avoided.

34. Mr. HYNINNEN (Finland) said that changes in matters relating to UNHCR's mandate which had occurred in the past few years could not be overestimated. While the situation in regions traditionally associated with generating flows of refugees and displaced persons had remained serious, a European dimension had re-emerged. The number of countries not affected by mass population movements was diminishing, while more and more countries were being asked to help solve the problems involved. The qualitative aspects of the issue had also changed and the continuing tragic situation in the former Yugoslavia, in particular, compelled countries and organizations to adopt a more pragmatic approach towards the new challenges facing them. The scope of present and

potential refugee situations was unlikely to diminish rapidly, at least not in Europe and adjacent geographical areas. His delegation fully shared the High Commissioner's view that continuous adjustment to change was needed both in international organizations and in their member countries.

35. As far as protection was concerned, his country, while remaining committed to its obligations under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, shared the view that complex problems were arising from the close association of movements of refugees seeking asylum and irregular migration. The cost of asylum procedures had become massive; in 1992 it had been estimated to represent 10 times UNHCR's budget. The viability of humane refugee policies seemed to be linked, at least in part, to further refinement and development of concepts and procedures and to the pursuit of cost efficiency. Global and regional cooperation was essential in that respect, as well as in promoting a more comprehensive approach that encompassed both the traditional protection-type activities and various aspects of prevention.

36. In his delegation's view, protective action should comprise four main elements, namely, political conflict prevention, capacity enhancement in the form of training and institution-building, mass information campaigns, and addressing the root causes. Finland welcomed the increasing attention being given by UNHCR to preventive action within its sphere of competence and expected such action to become as important as protection. Since the effectiveness of prevention would normally be enhanced through early warning, his delegation endorsed the suggestion that a focal point for early warning of refugee and refugee-like situations should be established within UNHCR. In cooperation with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, such an office might begin by gathering data on geographical regions or subregions for potential action.

37. His delegation considered that it would be in the genuine interest of countries in the area as well as those outside it if UNHCR were to focus greater attention on the States of the former Soviet Union and strengthen its presence there. Assistance for capacity-building and related activities should take place in parallel with other forms of preventive action. The preparation of mass information campaigns to be implemented jointly by UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) was a good start. Beyond that, however, there was a special need for a comprehensive humanitarian strategy for the area of the former Soviet Union. The formulation of such a strategy called for close cooperation among interested countries and various international organizations.

38. With the approach of winter, humanitarian prospects in the former Yugoslavia remained bleak despite the large-scale relief being provided through dynamic and innovative UNHCR action. His delegation fully agreed with emphasis placed by the High Commissioner on the crucial importance of achieving a political solution to the ongoing conflict.

39. The new geographical dimension should not, however, overshadow the continuing need for UNHCR action in regions more traditionally associated with refugee flows. His delegation noted that remarkable results had been achieved in many parts of Asia and appreciated the efforts being made in Africa, the

continent which received the bulk of Finnish development assistance. The situation in the Horn of Africa remained fragile despite some signs of improvement and a major humanitarian and political effort was needed in Angola to avert another large-scale crisis.

40. The plight of displaced persons in many parts of the world also required attention. UNHCR was only one of the organizations that could make a contribution in that respect and, in so doing, it should take account of the complementarities and expertise of other international bodies. His delegation commended the High Commissioner's approach to the issue and the principles adopted as a basis for drafting the relevant criteria for launching and carrying out operations.

41. While UNHCR had been successful in meeting the enormous managerial challenges facing it, the need for further reforms was self-evident and his delegation looked forward to seeing major progress in that respect during the coming year. The effectiveness of operations could be increased by optimizing cooperation between UNHCR and other international bodies along the lines suggested by the High Commissioner in her opening statement at the 481st meeting. At the same time, UNHCR should continue its efforts to identify new funding sources, since an appreciable increase in contributions by many of the traditional donors could no longer be expected. In particular, an effort should be made to involve more countries in providing assistance to refugees.

42. As far as his own country was concerned, UNHCR was and remained the main channel of multilateral assistance to refugees. More than any other major organization, UNHCR had been able to maintain the support it received from Finland at a high level despite the unprecedented economic crisis affecting his country. He was pleased to announce that his Government had decided to provide UNHCR with an additional allocation of 8.5 million Finnish markkas, thus increasing the current year's contributions by one quarter.

43. In conclusion, he said that impossible burdens should not be imposed on humanitarian organizations. Relief was not a substitute for political solutions; humanitarian action had to be accompanied by parallel measures of peacemaking and post-conflict economic and social rehabilitation. Concerted action was therefore urgently required. Institutional reform remained one of the priority areas of his country's policy in the context of the United Nations.

44. Mr. de RIEDMATTEN (Switzerland) said that his delegation shared the main concerns expressed in the High Commissioner's opening statement. The international community was once more faced with a paradoxical situation where repatriation operations conducted with remarkable success were offset by new large-scale refugee flows. Violations of the principles of international humanitarian law were on the increase; in that connection, he referred to the International Conference on Protection of Victims of War recently convened by his country and attended by nearly 160 States.

45. Since the Executive Committee's last session, the overall situation of refugees worldwide had deteriorated so much that the year's successes had taken place almost unnoticed. Yet in Cambodia, in particular, UNHCR had not

only fulfilled one of its priority tasks, but, by ensuring the repatriation of Khmer refugees before the start of the elections, had also made an appreciable contribution towards the country's democratization. Prompt action by international specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations was now needed to put Cambodia on the road to development, which was the best guarantee of a lasting peace. Quick impact projects (QIPs) would seem to be a promising means of facilitating the transition from humanitarian to development assistance.

46. Major humanitarian operations were increasingly being conducted within a multidisciplinary context that called for an integrated approach. The relationship between humanitarian action and the peace-keeping activities of the United Nations was thus an issue of growing importance for all organizations involved in humanitarian work and, consequently, for UNHCR as well. Recent experience suggested that a clear and consistent distinction had to be maintained between the mandates of peace-keeping forces, on the one hand, and humanitarian agencies, on the other. An organization such as UNHCR had to preserve the greatest possible independence in carrying out its essentially impartial activities. That had been the High Commissioner's position all along and his delegation strongly supported that approach.

47. It also fully endorsed the views expressed by the High Commissioner on the subject of a comprehensive strategy of cooperation with other humanitarian organizations, whether within the United Nations system or outside it, such as ICRC and non-governmental organizations.

48. In commending the quality of the High Commissioner's note on international protection (A/AC.96/815), he welcomed the information campaigns conducted in certain countries of origin in collaboration with IOM as a means of dealing with irregular migration. The proposals relating to the protection of the internally displaced appeared to be both realistic and flexible. UNHCR's activities in that field were designed to perform a preventive function and to avoid discrimination between displaced persons, on the one hand, and refugees, on the other. At the same time, his delegation supported the High Commissioner wish to pursue its activities on behalf of displaced persons without seeking an extension of her mandate and, like other delegations, considered that discussion of that crucial issue should continue in the Subcommittee of the Whole on International Protection.

49. Like other industrialized countries, Switzerland had been compelled to adopt a policy of greater firmness in matters of asylum so as to ensure the protection of genuine asylum-seekers. In so doing, his country intended to fulfil its obligations towards persecuted persons under the 1951 Convention, one of the essential points of which was the principle of non-refoulement.

50. The worsening of the refugee situation worldwide and the proliferation of regional conflicts meant that funds might be less readily forthcoming than hitherto and that an order of priorities might have to be established. Although, like many other donor countries, Switzerland was prepared to maintain its level of support and to place additional funds at UNHCR's disposal, present financial difficulties might stand in the way of the realization of those good intentions. His country would do its best to achieve a level of contributions in 1994 comparable to that for the current

year. It also continued to be willing to place experts of the Swiss Disaster Relief Corps at UNHCR's disposal, as it had done under the shelter programme for the former Yugoslavia. That type of operational cooperation would be strengthened in future.

51. Switzerland had regularly encouraged all efforts by UNHCR designed to improve programme management and efficiency. In that spirit, it supported the idea of establishing an internal inspection unit, the precise modalities of which were still to be defined by the Subcommittee on Administrative and Financial Matters.

52. In conclusion, he reiterated his delegation's admiration and esteem for the High Commissioner personally and for all UNHCR officials working so selflessly and courageously to defend humanitarian principles.

53. Mrs. BAUTISTA (Philippines) joined previous speakers in paying a tribute to the High Commissioner and to all UNHCR officials, both men and women, who had risked or lost their lives in discharging UNHCR's mandate in situations of conflict and danger. The security of UNHCR staff should be a matter of particular concern to all members of the Executive Committee.

54. Her delegation endorsed the High Commissioner's call for continued commitment, particularly among countries of asylum and donor countries, to the universal right of refuge and the rights of refugees. The High Commissioner was to be congratulated on her initiatives in finding preventive solutions for refugees and her activities on behalf of internally displaced populations. In many cases, the root causes of refugee problems were the lack of sustainable economic development and human rights violations. Her delegation shared the hope that the international community would intensify its efforts to assist developing countries in the pursuit of well-being and progress for their people.

55. In her delegation's view, UNHCR had to be very clear in the pursuit of its primary function of protection, its preventive and development functions being, of necessity, performed in conjunction with Governments, the relevant governmental and nongovernmental organizations and other United Nations agencies. The Office's continued collaborative efforts with those organizations and with Governments and its pursuit of cooperation with non-governmental organizations as "partners in action" showed that UNHCR shared that view. Her delegation welcomed the distinction drawn by the High Commissioner in defining criteria for involvement in the case of internally displaced persons, namely, that primary responsibility was assumed only when the activities in question were directly linked with UNHCR-mandated functions, UNHCR's role being secondary if that was not the case. UNHCR's capacity to respond to the needs of internally displaced persons was clearly limited by its mandate and the solution was not to be sought in extending the mandate, but in close collaboration with responsible agencies and authorities.

56. Her delegation had noted with particular interest that progress had been made during the past year in meeting the needs of refugee women and children, who not only made up the bulk of the refugee population, but were also the groups most vulnerable to abuse and exploitation even after reaching the relative security of refugee camps. Sexual violence against women in times of

conflict might be nothing new, but the extent to which sexual abuse had been systematically resorted to and the frequency of its occurrence were appalling. When such cases included abuse of female children, they became unbearably odious. The Philippines strongly supported continued efforts to find solutions designed to protect refugee women from sexual violence and welcomed the revised guidelines on refugee children.

57. As an Asian country, the Philippines was particularly happy to note that UNHCR activities in the Asian region were nearing completion. That should not, however, be taken to mean that the region's refugees problems were actually over. In cooperation with the countries concerned, UNHCR should try to solve the problems of those who had fled conflict areas and had received asylum, but did not want to become refugees under the terms of the 1951 Convention. As the screening process for all countries in the region was to be completed by mid-1994 at the latest, her delegation noted with concern that only persons denied refugee status would remain in camps in 1994. The question of finding solutions for those cases should be placed high on the agenda of the Steering Committee of the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA).

58. Many countries of first and temporary asylum would be interested to see how the problem of those who were neither resettled nor voluntarily repatriated was solved. The problem was particularly acute in first-asylum countries where local integration was not a viable option. The Philippines looked forward to discussions with UNHCR with a view to finding solutions that would be in the best interests of both the persons and the Governments concerned. Pending such discussions, she associated herself with the representative of Thailand in urging that the voluntary repatriation programme be pursued with determined effort as being vital to the solution of the refugee problem in SouthEast Asia and in expressing the hope that the formal meeting of the CPA Steering Committee would provide an opportunity for all parties to reach a speedy and durable solution to the problem of Indo-Chinese asylum-seekers.

59. In conclusion, she reiterated her Government's support for UNHCR's activities and the initiatives of the High Commissioner in the performance of her difficult tasks and thanked donor countries and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for their cooperation in caring for asylum-seekers in the Philippines.

60. Mr. ELKHATIM (Sudan) recalled that, despite its meagre resources, his country had shouldered the enormous burden of hosting more than 1 million refugees in the past three decades. Of late, Sudan, together with all other parties concerned, had been looking forward to an orderly voluntary repatriation operation. Unfortunately, that opportunity had not materialized and Sudan was continuing to discharge its responsibilities towards its refugee population on behalf of the international community.

61. The impact of refugees on all aspects of life was constantly increasing in Sudan, while adherence to the principle of international burden-sharing, which should remain the governing principle in dealing with all refugee situations, was decreasing alarmingly there. His Government could not hide its disappointment that the ambition of massive, orderly and effective voluntary repatriation in the Horn of Africa had not been fulfilled. The

winds of change that had created favourable conditions for the durable solution that voluntary repatriation represented were still not being taken advantage of by the international community.

62. The refugee case load in Sudan remained unchanged. The dream of making 1992 the Year of Voluntary Repatriation had not been realized and 1994 was approaching without any positive signs that it would come about. Sudan continued to host over 500,000 Eritrean refugees and over 300,000 Ethiopian refugees, who looked forward to voluntarily returning to their homes. Only recently, an exceptional return of approximately 13,000 Ethiopian refugees had taken place in very special circumstances and without any assistance from the international community. That experience had been thoroughly evaluated at a workshop organized in Khartoum on 17 and 18 September 1993, with participants from the Ethiopian Government, UNHCR and NGOs. The conclusions drawn, which interested delegations were invited to examine, clearly underscored the vital importance of assisting returnees in order to avoid creating other emergencies requiring long-term and complex solutions. Consequently, his Government called on the Executive Committee to place the question of the voluntary repatriation of the Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees at the top of its agenda and urged the international community to support the Eritrean plan of voluntary repatriation, which had been fully considered by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in July 1993. The international community needed to act expeditiously in support of the plan, particularly by rebuilding essential parts of the infrastructure at the receiving end. His Government supported the reintegration programmes for receiving areas in Ethiopia.

63. Although the scheme of voluntary repatriation for Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees had not yet been implemented, a number of inaccurate media reports on a supposedly voluntary return from Sudan to both Eritrea and Ethiopia had been published. In most cases, the reports were totally unrealistic, but they were sometimes quoted in public information releases, leading to an erroneous impression that such repatriation was taking place on a considerable scale. Consequently, the budgetary allocations for the assistance programme to refugees in Sudan were dwindling and cuts had sometimes been made in very vital areas and services. The end result would be fewer and fewer resources for the same case load. His Government therefore called on UNHCR to engage with it in a serious study of the situation in order to avoid any negative repercussions.

64. Sudan had always taken pride in its application of purely humanitarian principles for dealing with matters relating to refugees. It would, of course, continue to do so and it hoped that others would refrain from injecting political factors into the humanitarian setting. Failure to exclude such extraneous factors would only cause the refugees to suffer, something that everyone should avoid. Effective sources of assistance to refugees were either drying up or being drastically reduced; for example, some NGOs were withdrawing from vital areas, such as health, the environment and self-help in agriculture for refugees, basing their decisions on non-humanitarian grounds despite the Sudanese Government's continued cooperation.

65. Two years previously, his Government had endorsed the agreement reached with WFP and the time had now come to assess its effectiveness in providing food for refugees. According to his Government's understanding, WFP's role was limited to the delivery of food at ports, national mechanisms being responsible for distribution and other stages. In practice, however, WFP had been trying to replace the national mechanisms, while UNHCR had stood on the sidelines. His Government, confident that WFP and UNHCR would spare no effort to cooperate in improving the effectiveness of food deliveries to the refugees, therefore called once again for an urgent reassessment of the arrangement.

66. His delegation was pleased to note UNHCR's improved performance in the field. It congratulated the High Commissioner and all her staff on the efforts they had been making and earnestly hoped that such improvements would continue. It also congratulated the High Commissioner on the functioning of the Office of the Senior Coordinator for Environmental Affairs, who had recently visited Sudan on a mission relating to the environment and refugees. His Government expected that some concrete action would follow as a result of that visit. Needless to say, the negative impact on the environment of refugees in the areas that hosted them in Sudan called for action and appropriate remedies, since the environment was indivisible and knew no political or geographical boundaries.

67. Just as Sudan was granting protection to refugees from neighbouring countries, there were also Sudanese refugees in the territories of some of its neighbours, totalling around 250,000. His Government regretted to report that most of those refugees were deprived of the necessary protection and assistance. It was extremely concerned about the well-being of thousands of unaccompanied refugee minors in Kenya, who were being exploited by the rebel movement for military purposes. His Government had made very positive efforts to protect those children, paving the way for their voluntary return to Sudan. Unfortunately, however, it had met with considerable obstacles. It reiterated its call to all concerned to cooperate in overcoming those obstacles and would leave no stone unturned in its legitimate attempts to protect its citizens in accordance with the principles of international law. It also reiterated its commitment to all international instruments governing refugee issues and would continue to accord protection and care to refugees in Sudan until they had voluntarily returned to their homelands.

68. Mgr. TABET (Holy See) congratulated the secretariat on the quality of the documentation produced and the High Commissioner and her staff on their courageous devotion to the cause of refugees and said that, through a vast network of organizations and groups taking an active interest in the fate of refugees and displaced persons, the Roman Catholic Church was trying to make a contribution motivated by its faith in the dignity of every individual and by its desire to promote solidarity within the entire human family, particularly in respect of those who suffered, so as to ensure respect for their rights. Guidelines for assistance to refugees had already been laid down in 1992 in a Holy See document that was intended to be a Church charter for the protection of those who, for various reasons, were obliged to seek refuge abroad.

69. The analyses and observations contained in the Note on International Protection (A/AC.96/815) deserved the Executive Committee's full attention. They showed that the current world situation involved enormous potential dangers which might undo international solidarity and make the fate of refugees and displaced persons even more precarious. The extent of population movements within and between countries and the increase in the number of forced exiles were causing fear and antagonism and generating defensive reactions. Accordingly, the Holy See's document stressed that refugees were a challenge to the international community. It was gratifying to note that the Note on International Protection (A/AC.96/815) echoed the call to the conscience of individuals and States to unite and combine their resources with a view to finding a prompt response proportionate to the dimensions of the problem. That response must necessarily entail a sharing of the burden of assistance to refugees, since only a small percentage of them sought or obtained asylum in countries outside their own region of origin. States must therefore strengthen their support for UNHCR so that it could fulfil its mandate.

70. Solidarity would be achieved by an improved exchange of information on refugee issues and also by the participation of all available services, including those of voluntary agencies. Coordination was necessary in order to arrive at a better evaluation of difficult situations and to channel aid more effectively. However, it was particularly important to create a favourable climate capable of mitigating or preventing negative xenophobic reactions and of educating peoples in understanding rather than rejection.

71. In order to cope with the vast population movements taking place, the international community was invited to make use of the most effective prevention mechanisms in order to achieve security for individuals and development for countries. Such action necessarily entailed respect for human rights, a democratic form of government, greater attention to economic and ecological balances and the appropriate and better targeted use of development aid. In that connection, the commitment of the United Nations, and of UNHCR in particular, to respect for human rights and the rights of minorities, as well as its "preventive diplomacy" role, must be encouraged. The protection of displaced persons inside their own country was an essential element in such prevention and the Holy See hoped that the international community would continue to consider the fate of such persons and to fill the serious gaps in the law relating to their protection.

72. It should nevertheless be borne in mind, as the Note on International Protection rightly indicated, that the institution of asylum and the principle of non-refoulement must be supported and strengthened, since they were currently in danger of being infringed by countries which tended to adopt increasingly selective and dissuasive asylum policies in seeking to protect themselves to the detriment of refugees. In many of its conclusions, the Executive Committee had formulated guidelines to help States to treat asylum-seekers in accordance with the 1951 Convention and other international instruments relating to refugees and human rights. Such instruments affirmed, in particular, that every country was responsible for respecting and enforcing respect for the rights of refugees in the same way that it guaranteed the rights of its own citizens.

73. Even if States were responsible for protecting their borders and were engaged in making a clearer classification of migratory groups, they could not close their borders to genuine refugees, send them away without any guarantee that they would be accepted in a third country or send them to a country where discriminatory action might be taken against them or their integrity might be seriously violated. Furthermore, States and international agencies must give the necessary attention to the refugee's family and work for family reunification. As was pointed out in international instruments relating to refugees, the principle of family unity should always be taken into account in refugee programmes.

74. Massive population inflows had led UNHCR to resort to the concept of "temporary protection". It was, however, important that, during the "temporary protection" period, refugees should be able to enjoy decent living conditions, particularly a family life, a job and the possibility of educating their children. The presence of "temporary" refugees should always prompt the international community to consider solutions that would make it possible for them to be voluntarily repatriated. In that connection, the Holy See welcomed the repatriation operations carried out in the past few months under the auspices of UNHCR.

75. The Holy See also welcomed the fact that the Subcommittee of the Whole on International Protection was concerning itself with the security of refugees by giving special attention to women and children, whom recent experience had shown to be the first victims of conflicts and, possibly, of the most ignoble crimes. In that connection, the thousands of mines laid represented a terrible danger for the lives of innocent people and the Holy See associated itself with all those who condemned the persons who had laid the mines or manufactured them and supported all the steps being taken to destroy them or prevent their activation.

76. The human solidarity displayed by every community which hosted refugees and by the activities of national and international organizations which took care of them or tried to eliminate the causes leading to their exile was an effective contribution to peace. It was a commitment from which the international community could not stand aloof and the Holy See and the Roman Catholic Church were determined to play an active role in it.

77. Mr. LARSEN (Denmark), endorsing the statement made by the representative of Belgium on behalf of the European Community and its member States at the 481st meeting, said that his Government greatly appreciated the outstanding leadership provided by the High Commissioner, Mrs. Ogata, and looked forward to her re-election.

78. The current session of the Executive Committee was taking place in an international situation which had presented UNHCR with enormous challenges. Emergencies requiring it to take comprehensive and speedy action had occurred with saddening repetitiveness over the past year. In a number of countries in which UNHCR was operating, the environment was becoming increasingly hostile and risky, characterized by violations of international humanitarian law, interference in the implementation of humanitarian assistance programmes and deliberate attacks on humanitarian field staff in areas of conflict or war, of which the number of UNHCR staff members who had been killed or wounded was a

tragic reminder. In that connection, he expressed Denmark's profound admiration for UNHCR's field staff, who continued to perform their duties despite the personal risk involved. His Government fully supported further international efforts to guarantee the safety and protection of United Nations personnel operating in areas of armed conflict.

79. In her opening statement, the High Commissioner had described in very clear and precise terms the financial strains which the increased level of activity was placing on UNHCR, whose global budget, for the second consecutive year, had surpassed the US$ 1 billion mark. UNHCR had mastered the challenges with great determination and Denmark urged the donor community to react with the same determination in responding to its funding needs. An adequate response could be brought about only by a substantial widening of the circle of traditional donors and by ensuring fairer burden-sharing among them. There was still a long way to go before that would be achieved. UNHCR had made a concentrated effort to increase the donor base, especially by bringing in new donor countries and by focusing on resource mobilization in the private sector. Denmark supported those efforts and urged Governments and prospective non-governmental donors to respond positively.

80. Furthermore, an adequate division of labour reflecting the comparative advantages of individual organizations and agencies and, in particular, close and well-coordinated cooperation and partnership with other agencies and non-governmental organizations were of the utmost importance, especially in a period when UNHCR's own resources were under severe strain. The Partnership in Action programme (PARINAC) (A/AC.96/INF.177) was a very promising step in the direction of more clearly defined and efficient cooperation with UNHCR's partners in the implementation of assistance programmes.

81. Strong inter-agency cooperation was also important both in emergencies and in the search for durable solutions. Denmark would like to see the development of a genuine partnership in action comprising not only the traditional agencies and organizations active in the field of humanitarian assistance, but also national and multilateral development agencies, including the international financial institutions, with a view to integrating humanitarian assistance with efforts to resolve the underlying causes of crisis and conflict. Those institutions had an important role to play both in preventing refugee situations and in the search for durable solutions, not least in facilitating voluntary repatriation by stimulating rehabilitation, economic growth and the creation of employment opportunities in the countries concerned.

82. In her opening statement, the High Commissioner had also dealt with the question of internally displaced persons and with how and to what extent UNHCR should be involved in that problem. Denmark welcomed the pragmatic line suggested by the High Commissioner and looked forward to further discussions, both in the Executive Committee and in other relevant United Nations bodies, in order to develop a comprehensive and adequate response to the immense and ever more demanding problem of the internally displaced.

83. A further element of paramount importance to UNHCR's ability to fulfil its mandate was the efficient management of scarce resources. At a time when donor countries, including Denmark, were strongly emphasizing the need for accountability and efficient, transparent and cost-conscious management within the United Nations system, his Government noted with satisfaction the impressive record that UNHCR had achieved with regard to programme management under the leadership of Mrs. Ogata. His Government encouraged and supported every step that the High Commissioner might take in order to strengthen further the efficient management of UNHCR, including her proposal to establish a post of inspector of operational activities and initiatives in favour of women and children.

84. The situation in the former Yugoslavia clearly demonstrated the need for variable approaches. In the area of conflict, Denmark was actively engaged, both financially and with manpower, in providing the necessary humanitarian assistance to the victims. With the oncoming winter, assistance would be of crucial importance. Furthermore, Denmark and other countries had introduced the concept of temporary protection, with a new law now being implemented for the more than 12,000 Bosnians who had so far sought refuge in Denmark or who had been invited to enter the country. However, that concept should not replace asylum within the meaning of the 1951 Convention and Denmark's national legislation. Temporary protection provided possibilities for suspending the ordinary asylum procedure for a fixed period and should offer the affected persons education and a process of reconciliation in preparation for their eventual return to their country and participation in its reconstruction.

85. He also thanked UNHCR for the excellent cooperation between it and the office recently established in Zagreb by the Danish Ministry of the Interior to deal with asylum and protection issues. The office had already proved to be a successful innovation, ensuring that persons in need of immediate protection obtained it outside the area of conflict as expeditiously as possible. The office was paying particular attention to urgent cases, including medical evacuations, and the on-the-spot presence had helped to speed up the protection process considerably.

86. He was glad to announce that, in response to the High Commissioner's appeal, Denmark would, in the near future and subject to approval by the Danish Parliament, make several new contributions to UNHCR. The amount which the Government had in mind was approximately US$ 8 million the major part of which would be provided for UNHCR's General Programmes. Total Danish contributions to UNHCR in 1993 would thus be brought to the record level of 1992, which had been equivalent to US$ 35 million. Those contributions did not include Danish assistance through the European Community or a number of contributions to NGOs which implemented refugee programmes in close cooperation with UNHCR. In any case, Denmark would continue to provide strong support - political, diplomatic and financial - to UNHCR's efforts to protect and assist the world's refugees.

87. Mr. de COURTEN (International Committee of the Red Cross) said that, with the end of an essentially bipolar world, the international community had entered into a new phase characterized by many hopes and widespread turmoil. The latter had forced ICRC to strengthen its presence in many countries where

conflicts were raging. Mainly of an internal nature, those conflicts originated in inter-ethnic or religious struggles and were marked by a fanaticism whose principal victims were civilians. Massive violations of human rights were leading to equally massive displacements of population and were creating waves of refugees. According to the United Nations, there were now 19 million refugees and 25 million internally displaced persons in the world.

88. It was in that context that UNHCR and ICRC found themselves working side by side in situations such as those in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, Mozambique, Pakistan, Cambodia, Tajikistan and Sudan. The task was so enormous that the coordination of work in order to avoid overlapping and gaps was even more essential than before.

89. The practical problems encountered in the field, particularly that of security - both institutions had unfortunately reported victims among their ranks - had led them to coordinate their approaches. Thus, the preservation of the apolitical and impartial nature of humanitarian activities was at the heart of their shared concerns. The absence of a specific humanitarian area, perceived as such and respected by the conflicting parties, would make it impossible for ICRC and UNHCR to provide the protection and assistance needed by victims and therefore to fulfil the mandates which the international community had entrusted to them. In particular, in conflicts having a major humanitarian dimension, there was a danger of regarding humanitarian action as just another form of political action or, worse still, as an alibi for States not to shoulder their responsibilities at the political level. As stated in the UNHCR Note on International Protection "Humanitarian action alone clearly cannot end conflict or prevent the resultant displacement, particularly where displacement is an objective of warfare and of systematic human rights abuses" (A/AC.96/825, para. 54).

90. In the field, the expanded role of peace-keeping forces was being confused with that of humanitarian agencies. In situations of conflict, it would be risky to think that the parties would all regard United Nations military contingents as neutral. For United Nations humanitarian agencies, the problem was therefore one of being viewed as neutral by all the combatants in order to be able to help all the victims in an impartial manner. A clear-cut distinction thus had to be made between the role of States in peace-keeping operations and that of neutral and impartial humanitarian organizations. ICRC, for its part, wanted to continue acting totally independently, guided solely by the interest of all the victims in the conflict. In that connection, it based itself on the universally accepted provisions of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, article 3 of which related to non-international armed conflict, and Additional Protocol II of 1977, which strengthened the legal protection of civilians against the effects of hostilities and abuses of power.

91. If international humanitarian law had actually been applied, the problem of refugees and displaced persons in cases of armed conflict would not have assumed the proportions that were now to be deplored. The rules of existing

international humanitarian law therefore had to be reaffirmed and States which had not yet done so had to be invited to ratify the two Additional Protocols of 1977 and to abide by their provisions in all existing conflicts. States would thus be engaging in prevention.

92. That had been the aim of the International Conference for the Protection of War Victims, which had been held in Geneva in August 1993 at the invitation of the Swiss Government. Its final declaration, which had been adopted by consensus, marked the refusal to accept violations of fundamental human rights and called for the improved coordination of emergency humanitarian activities, increased support for humanitarian agencies and access to areas of conflict. It also called on States to enforce international humanitarian law and to take firm measures against countries responsible for violations of that law.

93. Mr. ŽUŽUL (Observer for Croatia), referring to the situation in the former Yugoslavia, said that the suffering of millions of war victims and the aggression committed against Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina called for sustained action by the international community. The situation required, first and foremost, urgent political and peaceful solutions which would not sanction the acquisition of territories by force and called for massive international assistance to help the victims to survive the winter and begin a normal life in the devastated and ethnically cleansed areas in Croatia.

94. The commitment of the people and authorities of Croatia to help the refugees and displaced persons in their territory had been demonstrated when Croatia, itself continuously exposed to brutal aggression, had received hundreds of thousands of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, most of them Muslims. His country had demonstrated its commitment by sheltering some 246,000 displaced persons from the occupied areas of Croatia and an additional 276,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who accounted for 12.5 per cent of the population of the free part of Croatia. His country encouraged others to act in the same spirit and to respect the agreements they had signed. That applied particularly to the Muslim side, which still held thousands of Croats hostage in central Bosnia. In addition, over 400,000 refugees and displaced persons were being cared for in private homes, and that was a tremendous burden for the Croatian population, economy and society. Croatia's monthly expenses for that purpose amounted to approximately US$ 62 million, a figure that exceeded the total financial aid it had received over the past two years.

95. It was obvious that assistance from many countries, either bilaterally or through international organizations, was rapidly decreasing. In the case of Croatia, such assistance met only 30 per cent of its requirements, compared with 60 per cent in 1992. Croatia therefore associated itself with the countries which had expressed alarm and disappointment about the prospects for the approaching third winter period.

96. Not a single person had returned to ethnically cleansed areas in Croatia, despite the fact that that was one of the most important objectives of the Vance plan, for whose implementation UNPROFOR was responsible. His Government sincerely hoped that, under the new UNPROFOR mandate, the implementation process would finally begin and it would do its utmost in that regard.

97. He reiterated his Government's readiness to continue searching for a peaceful solution to the crisis in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina on the basis of the relevant decisions of the Security Council and the London Conference. In that process, his Government would continue to act constructively, but remained determined to defend Croatia's territorial integrity.

98. The situation with regard to refugees and displaced persons remained critical and his country therefore drew the attention of the international community to the possibility of massive population movements across the borders of Croatia.

99. The crisis in the territory of the former Yugoslavia was the most difficult one in the world today. International humanitarian efforts were beginning to show signs of reduced financial commitment and, if the major donors did not make new pledges, thousands of refugees would be in danger. The Executive Committee should therefore make a strong appeal to the international community and the public at large.

100. Mr. MACRIS (Observer for Cyprus) said that the comprehensive strategy planned by UNHCR in order to meet new and ongoing emergencies enjoyed his Government's support. Cyprus, which was experiencing the forcible uprooting of one third of its population by the occupying Power, was working in close cooperation with UNHCR for the fulfilment of its noble task. It was well-known that his Government had made good use of the assistance allocated to Cyprus, aimed at improving the general living conditions of the displaced persons and at carrying out bi-communal projects with a view to improving mutual trust and consolidating the confidence-building process. In that connection, he expressed his country's gratitude to the United States Government for its continuous interest and the generous assistance it channelled to the people of Cyprus through UNHCR.

101. His delegation fully endorsed the view that the best solution to the refugee problem was repatriation under conditions of safety. It therefore called on Governments to create opportunities that would allow refugees to exercise their right to return to their homes. If United Nations resolutions calling for the return of all refugees to their homes in safety and for the restoration of and respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Cypriots had been implemented, the refugee problem in Cyprus would have been solved long ago. The Cyprus problem must be solved through peaceful processes on the basis of United Nations resolutions and indisputable principles which should safeguard democracy and protect human rights, as well as the right to freedom of movement and settlement and the right to property.

102. In conclusion, he thanked UNHCR and all those involved in activities in Cyprus and assured the Executive Committee that his country would continue to cooperate with and support UNHCR's efforts to find solutions to the refugee problem.

103. Mr. MORVAY (Hungary) said that 1993 could be regarded as a year of vast humanitarian challenges, especially in Africa and Europe, demanding emergency responses. He expressed his Government's full support for the High Commissioner's concept of preventive strategy based on the existence of links between peacemaking, peace-keeping and humanitarian action.

104. As a front-line country, Hungary had been the first to experience the effects of the southern Slav crisis. From the summer of 1991 to the end of August 1993, 66,559 refugees and displaced persons had fled to Hungary.

105. In order to establish a reliable registration system, a new identification card had been issued for them by the Hungarian authorities. As a result, some 8,000 displaced persons were living in Hungary and approximately 3,200 were being accommodated in permanent reception centres and temporary shelters. There were also 30,000 de facto refugees, mainly ethnic Hungarians from Romania, living in Hungary and their integration into his country's society had advanced remarkably.

106. The continuing southern Slav crisis was the result of problems relating to the accommodation of and support for displaced persons. Special projects had to be designed for that purpose and new infrastructural facilities had to be established.

107. From 1 January 1992 to 30 September 1993, infrastructure and operational costs at the five largest reception centres and temporary shelters had amounted to Ft 884 million. During the same period, the accommodation of refugees had required an additional Ft 770 million. All those expenses had been met by the Refugee Support Fund of Hungary with a budget of Ft 1 billion for 1992 and 1993, respectively. UNHCR's financial support for refugees and displaced persons from the former Yugoslavia had amounted to Ft 708 billion in 1992. His Government had recently been informed that the allocation for 1993 might be substantially reduced at a time when new refugees could be expected to arrive in Hungary from the former Yugoslavia, particularly from Voivodina, where ethnic Hungarians were under constant threat. Nationals of other countries were also expected to seek refuge in Hungary owing to economic pressure, poverty and hopelessness.

108. Although it was experiencing serious financial and economic difficulties compounded by the process of change, his country had left its borders open to those fleeing persecution. The Hungarian Government had not only appreciated the financial assistance it received from the international community, but had endeavoured to contribute in kind to UNHCR relief programmes. His country found itself confronted with economic and financial losses that were directly attributable to the effects of the strict implementation of sanctions imposed by the Security Council on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Those losses, which were constantly growing, had reached US$ 1 billion. Under those circumstances, his people relied to a greater extent to the solidarity of the international community. It sincerely hoped that the planned cuts in the project designed to provide supplementary assistance for its efforts to care for refugees in Hungary would not be made necessary by a financial shortfall in the Special Operation for the Former Yugoslavia.

109. Hungary was making the necessary preparations for expected new emergency situations. It was sparing no effort to create a national legal framework corresponding to accepted international standards. In that regard, the Hungarian Parliament had adopted an act on citizenship in March 1993 and another on aliens in September 1993 and proposals on asylum law would be submitted to the Government soon. All those developments would speed up the withdrawal of the geographical reservations Hungary had made to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol in 1989. By Government decree, the new Office of Refugee and Migration Affairs had been established in the spring of 1993.

110. The newly introduced restrictions in some European countries whereby asylum-seekers were treated according to their country of origin rather than as individual cases were matters of concern to Hungary's Government and population.

111. Hungary had achieved positive results through its long cooperation with UNHCR. Ongoing UNHCR projects in Hungary had greatly assisted his Government and the responsible authorities in tackling the refugee problem in accordance with international standards. The computerized registration system provided by UNHCR had become an indispensable tool for the Office of Refugee and Migration Affairs. Further development of UNHCR databases and the earliest possible on-line access to it would be of vital importance for the Hungarian authorities in conducting eligibility determination on the basis of sound country-of-origin information.

112. Mr. GOAGOSEB (Namibia) said that the international community, UNHCR and other relevant humanitarian agencies were faced with the momentous task of providing effective and immediate assistance to the victims of internal conflicts and war. Humanitarian assistance was but one aspect of the needs required by civilians. The international community was called upon to interact with a strong political will on the basis of an unbiased attitude so as to ensure durable peace and stability in conflict situations.

113. In 1992, the Executive Committee had discussed the possibilities for peace in Angola and expressed the hope that positive developments prevailing at that time would pave the way for the refugees to return to their own country, but, unfortunately, the war continued in Angola. Aware of the financial dilemma facing the international community, he nevertheless considered it his duty to state that Angola was being seriously neglected. According to available statistics, over 1,000 human beings died in Angola everyday and more than 2 million people were on the brink of starvation.

114. As the immediate southern neighbour of Angola, Namibia experienced a daily influx of refugees forced to leave their country. While its resources had been stretched to the limits, Namibia would not fail in its duty to provide a safe haven for those seeking refuge.

115. His delegation viewed the volatile situation in South Africa with great concern. Although a date had been set for the first-ever non-racial democratic election, the ongoing violence did not help to create the necessary

stable environment. The possibility of a refugee influx from South Africa could therefore not be ruled out entirely. If that became a reality, Namibia would inevitably call on the international community for assistance.

116. The ongoing conflict in Somalia required not only peace-keeping and humanitarian assistance, but also made it necessary for UNHCR's mandate to be expanded to include internally displaced persons.

117. Unforeseen delays in the preparation of internal legislation had not yet made it possible for his Government to ratify the international instruments concerning refugees, but a positive step had been taken in that direction. The Cabinet of the Government of the Republic had approved Namibia's accession and the Parliament of the Republic was to give its final approval.

118. As a young nation, Namibia appealed to the international community to help it meet the needs of future asylum-seekers and would-be refugees. It pledged its support and cooperation with UNHCR to combat the refugee problem.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.